



TP Talking Points

Building Language & Summary Skills For Any Subject Area



The Positive Engagement Project
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TP Talking Points

Talking Points is a review game intended to stimulate student discussion and use of academic vocabulary. Within the structure of Talking Points, students are required to filter information by ranking the identified vocabulary terms and then using them to summarize both, their own and their partner's verbal explanation in a concise sentence or sentences. We could write an infinite number of pages on the significance of speaking, academic vocabulary, summarizing, and writing in the classroom, but we won't do that here. We know the importance of each of the aforementioned skill sets for all of our students, but especially for our English Language Learners.

Procedurally, the game is fairly simple: complete an assigned task by explaining it to a partner/opponent using a given set of vocabulary terms. Even though the procedure isn't terribly complicated, the skills needed to play are very rigorous and require an amplified level of cognitive output. We know that the Common Core State Standards emphasize that our students be able to go deeper with their learning and justify their reasoning. Talking Points is a great way for students to do these things. Instead of giving the philosophy behind the activity, let's just dive in on how it is set up.

How is Talking Points set up?

First and foremost, Talking Points is set up to be played in pairs. Each player gets their own game board. The game board is set up in five parts: Task, Vocabulary, My Summary, My Partner's Summary, and an area for the final tally of points. Let's look at each of the five parts individually, starting with the task.

TASK

Explain the life cycle of a butterfly.

The task is the area at the top of the page where you give your students an assignment to complete. The task can be from any subject, ranging from English Language Arts to Music. We will give some examples, both here in this document and at our website, www.PEPnonprofit.org. We will use the task, “Explain the life cycle of a butterfly” as our example as we go through the different sections of Talking Points.

Notice that this task is not looking for a single answer, nor is it something you should have your students use for Talking Points unless you have had ample time learning about the life cycle of butterflies. Your task should be set up in a way that allows your students to dig deep into what they know. Let’s move onto the vocabulary section.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Points	Rank	Total
pupa			
egg			
larva			
adult			
caterpillar			
butterfly			

The vocabulary section is where the main part of Talking Points takes place. You can either (A) give your students the set of academic vocabulary needed to answer the task, or (B) have your class generate the needed academic vocabulary to answer the task.

We leave that up to each teacher and their unique classroom situations. We tend to go with option (B), but option (A) is better if you are pressed for time.

In either option, the goal is for the students to use the terms as they explain the answer to the task. We will use pupa, egg, larva, adult, caterpillar, and butterfly as the example vocabulary for the task of “Explain the life cycle of a butterfly.” If you go with option (A), you should have these words listed on the left under the heading of Vocabulary. If you go with option (B), students should list the academic vocabulary determined by the class. You will notice other headings in the Vocabulary section like, Rank, Points, and Total. We will explain what those are for when we get to the section on **How Do I Play Talking Points**.

My Summary

The summary section is broken into two different sections: one for the student to summarize, in writing, what they said for their task and a second to summarize what their partner said as they explained their task. The My Summary portion of Talking Points emphasizes the importance of writing with a purpose and keeping the explanation to the point. In the upper grades it is expected that these sentences fit the standard for what you require in any writing: capitals, proper punctuation, neatness, etc... You need to hold the same high standard for these summaries as you would any piece of writing.

Besides the non-negotiable of your expectations, we have two additional rules. First, students **MUST USE** the top **THREE** ranked words in their summaries. They can use some of the other academic vocabulary, but the top three ranked words must be used.

Also, if they choose to write one sentence, it **MUST BE 14 WORDS** or less. This rule forces students to choose their words wisely and in a succinct manner.

If they need to use more than 14 words, they should write more than one sentence to summarize the main points. In that case, the average sentence length **MUST BE 14 WORDS** or less. For example, if the first sentence is 16 words and the second sentence is 10 words, the average sentence length would be 13. It will be important for you to explain this to your students and show them how to find their average sentence length. We will explain how points are awarded for this section of Talking Points later when we explain **How Do I Play Talking Points**.

Partner Summary

The second part of the summary section is exactly like the previous section, but this time the student is required to summarize their partner's explanation with 14 words or less or an average of 14 words or less. Again, we will explain how points are given later when we explain how to play Talking Points.

Final Tally of Points

The very bottom of the game board is dedicated to tallying all of the points accumulated during the playing of Talking Points. There are different point totals that need to be added. First, points for how many times the vocabulary terms are used. The second point total is for the written summary (ten possible points). The third, and final, point total is for the written summary of the player's partner explanation (ten possible points).

How Do I Play Talking Points?

Talking Points is set up to be played in pairs. Each player gets their own game board, but they have different tasks assigned. This point is so important we are going to state it a second time; *each player has a different task.*

As mentioned above, the task should be based on something that the students are reviewing, not information they do not know. The Positive Engagement Project have provided this PDF file for you to use as a resource, but also a word template available for you to download so you can type in your tasks and vocabulary. We have provided a number of examples at the end of this document, but we encourage you to send your tasks and selected vocabulary terms to us so we can make them available at www.PEPnonprofit.org for other teachers to use!

We can't stress enough how important the task is. The level of depth and complexity is based on the types of questions that we ask. In the United States, the Common Core State Standards require students to show a deep understanding of concepts and to have the ability to justify their reasoning with evidence and proof. Asking a student to explain the lifecycle of a butterfly is more complex than asking a student to simply identify the four stages of the lifecycle of a butterfly.

Once the tasks have been assigned and the vocabulary words have been determined (either given by the teacher or brainstormed by the students), it's time to play. Player 1 gets 1 – 2 minutes to verbally answer the task. Player 2 (the recorder) takes the game board from player 1 and makes a tally mark next to the vocabulary word every time player 1 uses that word.

When time has expired, both players look at the tally marks as the recorder writes the total with a numeric representation under the Total heading. Together, both players rank the vocabulary words in order of importance. The most important term is ranked #1, and then so on and so forth (see example below).

Vocabulary	Points	Rank	Total
pupa	III	3	3
egg	II	1	2
larva	I	6	1
adult	IIII	2	4
caterpillar	II	5	2
butterfly	II	4	2

Both players should rank the vocabulary terms after the task has been completed.

The tally points are totaled here.

Now that points have been recorded and the vocabulary terms ranked, both players get a few minutes to write. In the My Summary section, player 1 uses the top three ranked vocabulary terms to write a summary of what they just explained to their partner. In the Partner Summary, player 2, the partner/recorder, uses the top three ranked vocabulary terms to write a summary of what they just heard from their partner on their own game board.

Regardless of the summary section, the player receives 10 points if the student has written a sentence summarizing the task in 14 words or less. In most cases, multiple sentences will be needed, so the rule then becomes an average sentence length of 14 words or less. Have the students count the words in each sentence and then write and circle the number at the end of each.

My Summary *(must use top three ranked words in summary)*

A butterfly goes through 4 stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. ⁽¹¹⁾ It starts from the egg and goes to the larva or a caterpillar. ⁽¹³⁾ The next stage is when the caterpillar forms the pupa or chrysalis. ⁽¹²⁾ After the pupa stage an adult butterfly has been formed and the cycle is complete. ⁽¹⁵⁾

If average sentence length is 14 words or less = 10 points YES — NO

Since average sentence length is 14 words or less, this player receives 10 points.

When both players have completed their summaries, the roles are now reversed and player 1 now becomes the recorder, while the second player has to answer the task on their game board. Player 1 takes the game board from their partner (player 2) and records a tally mark for each time that player uses one of the designated vocabulary terms. The same process is used for ranking the vocabulary terms and writing the summaries.

The final step for the players is to add up their vocabulary points, with the My Summary points, and the Partner Summary points.

Vocabulary Points **14** + My Summary Points **10** + Partner Summary **10** = **34** Total Points

The player with the most “talking points” is the person with the most points. In other words, we don’t really declare winners and losers. Talking Points is meant for students to orally explain a task and then to be able to summarize that response (and the response of their partner) in a brief written form.

What Does Talking Points Look Like For Primary Students?

We have two suggestions for using Talking Points with younger students. First, you can use the primary game board that only includes the Task and Vocabulary Points sections. With this version, students are only explaining their task to their partner and receiving points for the number of times they used their vocabulary terms. Student will still rank their words, but the summary portions have been removed.

If you think your primary students can handle the summary section, use the regular game board, but modify your criteria for the sentences. They obviously won't be able to find the average of their sentences, so you can remove the sentence length restriction.

**There is a word document version of both game boards available for you to download where you can edit them to meet your needs.*

Talking Points Directions Reference Sheet

1. Put students in pairs and give each player a game board with different tasks.
2. Give the first player 1 – 2 minutes to complete their assigned task.
3. Player 2 keeps track of how many times player 1 uses the vocabulary terms (on the game board of player 1).
4. When time is up, both players should total the tally marks and rank the vocabulary terms together.
5. Players are given 1 – 2 minutes to write a summary of the first task. Player 1 writes in the My Summary section of their game board. Player 2 writes in the Partner Summary on their game board.
6. Players count their sentence lengths and determine if they average 14 words or less. If they are 14 words or less, they circle YES for the 10 points.
7. Players switch rolls and repeat steps 2 – 6.
8. Players add up their vocabulary points, My Summary points, and Partner Summary points and mark their total on the bottom of the game board.

Primary Talking Points Directions

Reference Sheet

1. Put students in pairs and give each player a game board with different tasks.
2. Give the first player 1 – 2 minutes to complete their assigned task.
3. Player 2 keeps track of how many times player 1 uses the vocabulary terms (on the game board of player 1).
4. When time is up, both players should total the tally marks and rank the vocabulary terms together.
5. Players switch rolls and repeat steps 2 – 4.

TASK

Vocabulary	Points	Rank	Total

My Summary *(must use top three ranked words in summary)*

If average sentence length is 14 words or less = 10 points YES – NO

Partner Summary *(must use top three ranked words in summary)*

If average sentence length is 14 words or less = 10 points YES – NO

Vocabulary Points + My Summary Points + Partner Summary = Total Points

Name _____

Partner _____

<p><u>TASK</u></p>

Vocabulary	Points	Rank	Total



The following are Task and Vocabulary examples. If you have tasks to share with other teachers, please send them to pepreps@yahoo.com and we will add yours to the list.

English Language Arts

Task: Explain the differences between figurative and literal meanings and why people would choose to use figurative language when speaking or writing.

Vocabulary: metaphor, idiom, figurative, literal, simile, personification, purpose

Task: Text structures serve different purposes. Compare how a text structure in chronological order is different than a text structure with a problem and a solution.

Vocabulary: structure, different, problem, solution, sequence, order

Task: Explain why you believe it is important for an author to develop the characters and setting early in a piece of writing as opposed to the end or not doing so at all.

Vocabulary: setting, character, visualize, develop, understand, background

Mathematics

Task: Explain if you should use yards or inches to measure the area of a soccer field and why.

Vocabulary: yards, inches, length, width, area

Task: Explain which number is larger 4,654 and 4,378 and support your answer.

Vocabulary: place value, thousands, hundreds, tens, ones, digit

Task: How can data displayed in tables and graphs be used to inform people?

Vocabulary: bar graph, table, line plot, data, circle graph, information

Social Studies

Task: "The pen is mightier than the sword." How does this statement relate to the American Revolution and do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Vocabulary: war, peace, power, American Revolution, British, Colonists

Task: Westward Expansion changed many things about America. What were the motives and reasons for expanding towards the West?

Vocabulary: Westward Expansion, Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clark, railroads, gold, Native Americans

Task: How is a map scale used and how might it be helpful to people?

Vocabulary: map, scale, distance, drawing, cartographer

Science

Task: How is temperature measured?

Vocabulary: thermometer, Fahrenheit, Celsius, temperature, conditions

Task: You are conducting an experiment and need some magnetic materials. Explain how you can check if an object is magnetic or not.

Vocabulary: magnetic, ore, converge, pull, push, force

Task: You have five senses; which of the five would you use to determine if an object could reflect light and why not some of the others?

Vocabulary: sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing, reflect, material